



H1N1 Provider Briefing

Date: November 10, 2009
To: All Healthcare Providers
From: Director of Health, David R. Gifford, MD, MPH
Re: Information on H1N1 in Rhode Island

Local Influenza Activity Level: Widespread¹; H1N1 predominant circulating strain

Rhode Island²: 144 hospitalized cases, 5 deaths

Sentinel Surveillance (% of visits due to influenza-like illness)³: Rhode Island: 8.95%, New England Region: 5.4%, Nation: 7.4%

H1N1 vaccination clinics for pregnant and recent post-partum women

Women & Infants Hospital has scheduled two H1N1 vaccination clinics for pregnant and recent post-partum women on Saturday, November 14th. These clinics will be held from 9am to 12pm in Providence and Woonsocket. **Only pregnant women and post-partum women in the initial 8 weeks after delivery will be eligible to receive the vaccine at these clinics.** Patients will be served at the walk-in clinics on a first come, first served basis and will be asked to present their insurance cards at the clinics.

- The Providence clinic will be held directly across the street from Women & Infants' main building, at 100 Dudley Street, level 0, suite 0020. There is free parking in the lot at the back of the building.
- The Woonsocket clinic will be held in Women & Infants' Medical Office Building, 2168 Diamond Hill Road in Woonsocket. There is free parking adjacent to the building.

For more information about the Women & Infants clinics, please call Women & Infants' Health Line at 1-800-921-9299 or see <http://www.womenandinfants.org/body.cfm?id=89&action=detail&ref=323>.

South County Hospital will hold an additional H1N1 vaccination clinic for pregnant women on Saturday, November 14th from 9am to 11am at its Potter Conference Center. Pregnant women who would like to be vaccinated at this free clinic must call the RSVP line at 788-1647. They must also complete a registration form, which will be available at the clinic or online at www.schospital.com. The first priority for those receiving the vaccine will be patients of the South County Hospital Center for Women's Health – Obstetrics & Gynecology. The hospital expects to have enough vaccine available for additional pregnant women.

H1N1 vaccination for pregnant women

HEALTH strongly urges all OB/GYNs and family practice providers to give the H1N1 vaccine to all pregnant women and post-partum women in the initial 8 weeks after delivery. With most of the H1N1 vaccine for pregnant women already distributed and the remaining vaccine coming soon, there is no need to prioritize amongst pregnant patients. **As vaccine supply allows**, any postpartum women up to 6 months may be vaccinated against H1N1 to protect their newborns who cannot be vaccinated. See <http://www.health.ri.gov/news/H1N1Advisories/LetterToOBGYNsAboutH1N1VaccinationForPregnantWomen.pdf> for a letter sent to OB/GYNs and family practice providers on this subject. **Vaccine providers who under-ordered H1N1 vaccine for their pregnant and post-partum patients should call Barbara McNeilly at 222-4640 to coordinate the delivery of additional doses.**

¹ Rhode Island reported Widespread activity for the week of October 25 to October 31, 2009. Influenza is circulating in all 5 regions of the state. For details see <http://www.health.ri.gov/flu/about/surveillance/>.

² Influenza-associated hospitalizations and deaths since September 1, 2009

³ Influenza-like illness activity reported by 26 sentinel surveillance sites from October 25 to October 31, 2009

Vaccination planning assistance available to H1N1 vaccine providers

HEALTH understands that the burden of vaccinating large numbers of patients against H1N1 has stressed some providers. Pediatricians and family physicians who need help planning for ways to administer the vaccine to their pediatric patients may call Virginia Paine at 222-4602. Providers who are vaccinating pregnant and post-partum women may call Barbara McNeilly at 222-4640 for planning assistance.

Women & Infants NICU visitation policy

In order to control the spread of infection and safeguard patients and families during flu season, Women & Infants Hospital has changed its visitation policy for patients in its neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). For families of NICU patients, only the mother and the significant other will be allowed to visit patients in the NICU. No other visitors will be allowed, and no children visits, including siblings of the baby, will be allowed. Kids Klub activities will also be discontinued during this time. Women & Infants understands that this may be difficult for families and appreciates the cooperation of families in adhering to this policy change and protecting NICU patients during the flu season.

Intranasal vaccines may cause false positive test results

The procedure used by the HEALTH Laboratory to test specimens for H1N1 will detect both seasonal and H1N1 flu in children who have received the nasal-spray form of either vaccine. Providers should be aware that nasal-spray vaccines may cause false positive test results in pediatric patients if administered within 7 days of specimen collection.

Change in reporting policy for H1N1/ILI deaths

Since the start of the H1N1 pandemic, The Office of State Medical Examiners (OSME) has accepted jurisdiction and death certification responsibilities on all H1N1 confirmed deaths and Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) deaths. However, staffing levels do not permit the OSME to continue this practice into the influenza season. OSME will continue to accept jurisdiction on all out-of-hospital fatalities and pediatric fatalities. The following guidelines will apply to all other deaths that occur in treatment facilities:

- All H1N1/ILI fatalities still need to be reported to OSME at 222-2948.
- If the death is due to a confirmed H1N1 infection, OSME will decline jurisdiction and refer certification of the case back to the treating physician. These deaths should be certified as "H1N1 influenza".
- If the death is from an ILI, OSME will generally decline jurisdiction (unless other circumstances require acceptance). A nasopharyngeal swab for viral testing should be submitted on these cases (this may still be collected after pronouncement of death, if it has not been done prior). Death certification will be referred back to the treating physician, who may certify these deaths as "Viral pneumonia (H1N1 submitted)".

Children will only be vaccinated in their own schools

Providers are reminded that they should not write notes for children indicating that they can be vaccinated at other schools. Children will only be vaccinated at the school in which they are enrolled.

Requirements for school physical examinations

According to Rhode Island regulations for school physical examinations, no student should be excluded from school for failure to provide documentation of a completed general physical exam. Sports physical exams are not a state requirement but may be required by individual schools. HEALTH will discuss the possibility of relaxing sports physical requirements with school leaders. For more information on rules and regulations for school physical exams, see http://www.thriveri.org/documents/Rules_Regs_School_Health.pdf.

Influenza infection control update

There is ongoing debate about influenza transmission and how best to reduce the risk of infection among healthcare workers. Masking the infected patient, when tolerated, continues to be an important aspect of infection control. When planning and implementing other infection control measures, experts must consider the dynamics of disease transmission, the immune status of their healthcare workers, and the availability of and compliance with personal protective equipment at their institutions. To read a thoughtful *Lancet* article

published last week that explores these variables in further detail, see <http://www.health.ri.gov/news/H1N1Advisories/PreventingTheSpreadOfH1N1ToHealthCareWorkers.pdf>.

The role of animals in the spread of H1N1

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management does not recommend that domestic pet animals be tested for H1N1. Cases of H1N1 in domestic pet animals are extremely rare. Pet animals do not appear to pose a significant risk of transmitting H1N1 to their owners, and the risk of animals becoming infected with H1N1 is very rare. The usual precautions of frequent hand washing and coughing into your elbow will minimize the risk of transmitting H1N1 to pets and to other people. The Department of Environmental Management is continually monitoring the situation and will revise its recommendations as appropriate.

Influenza vaccine safety

In age groups for which it is indicated, live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV) is a safe, well-tolerated, highly immunogenic, and effective vaccine to prevent influenza infection. To read a 2008 article from *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* on myths commonly associated with LAIV, see <http://www.mayoclinicproceedings.com/content/83/1/77.long>.

The H1N1 vaccine is just as safe as the seasonal flu vaccine. It has been manufactured, tested, and licensed using the same process and facilities used for seasonal flu vaccines. Vaccination is the best way to prevent illness from H1N1 and to prevent spreading the virus to people at high risk of flu-related complications. To read more about H1N1 vaccine safety, see:

- <http://www.health.ri.gov/news/H1N1Advisories/H1N1FluVaccineSafety.pdf> (HEALTH)
- http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/vaccine_safety_qa.htm (CDC)
- <http://www.fda.gov/BiologicsBloodVaccines/Vaccines/ApprovedProducts/ucm181950.htm> (FDA)

Posters promoting vaccination for pregnant women available on HEALTH's website

"No Flu On Board," a poster developed by the CDC promoting flu vaccination for pregnant women, is available for providers to download and print on HEALTH's website at <http://www.health.ri.gov/materialbyothers/NoFluOnBoard.pdf>. Other free educational resources on seasonal and H1N1 flu are available on CDC's website at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/freeresources.htm>. Materials in other languages are available on HEALTH's website at <http://www.health.ri.gov/flu/languages/>.

Resources

- HEALTH at <http://www.health.ri.gov>;
- Archived partner briefings and regular news updates: <http://www.health.ri.gov/news/flu/>
- H1N1 Information Line (M-F 8:30am- 4:30pm) 401-222-8022
- H1N1 email address h1n1@health.ri.gov
- <http://www.flu.gov>